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# Spectral Analysis for Rare-Earth Ions in Transparent Solids

by Clyde A. Morrison and Donald E. Wortman

ARL-TR-635

June 1995



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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 1995		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final, from FY94
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Spectral Analysis for Rare-Earth Ions in Transparent Solids			5. FUNDING NUMBERS PE: H44	
6. AUTHOR(S) Clyde A. Morrison and Donald E. Wortman				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Research Laboratory Attn: AMSRL-PS-AA 2800 Powder Mill Road Adelphi, MD 20783-1197			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER ARL-TR-635	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Research Laboratory 2800 Powder Mill Road Adelphi, MD 20783-1197			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES AMS code: P611102.H44 ARL PR: 4R7A71				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) A model was developed that includes a crystal-field Hamiltonian and the free-ion Hamiltonian for the analysis of the spectra of rare-earth ions in transparent solids. The report discusses phenomenological crystal-field parameters, $B_{km}$ , obtained by the fitting of the experimental data of a particular ion-host combination, as well as their relationship with the derived crystal field parameters. The latter parameters, the derived $B_{km}$ , and factors affecting the Hartree-Fock values of $\langle r^k \rangle$ , such as shielding, wave function expansion, etc, are considered in detail. The theory of the transition probabilities of electric and magnetic dipole transitions are presented, as well as magnetic $g$ factors, line strengths, branching ratios, and lifetimes. The entire work leans heavily on the investigations, both theoretical and experimental, performed at Harry Diamond Laboratories (now part of the Army Research Laboratory), and this work is referenced throughout this report.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Rare-earth spectra, lasers, triply ionized rare-earth ions			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 31	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

## Preface

New lasers that are more efficient and operate at other wavelengths than those currently in use are constantly being required for a variety of purposes. In addition to commercial uses, military uses vary, for example, from communications, range finding, missile guidance, and countermeasures to high-powered weapons systems and nuclear fusion. The development of lasers with new, unique properties is desirable also because they stimulate new commercial and military uses that previously may have been unforeseen.

Solid-state laser materials doped, primarily, with triply ionized lanthanides (rare-earth ions) play an important role in this scheme. New varieties of exotic single-crystal materials are continuing to be developed, and it is desirable to have a method for predicting their potential properties as laser host materials. New lanthanide/host laser systems generally must rely on time-consuming and costly experimental programs for evaluation of their efficiency. The effort required also is very massive for developing techniques to grow optical quality crystals of sufficiently large dimensions.

There is a need, therefore, to have a theoretical capability to aid in the selection, from among the many lanthanide/host combinations, of the systems that offer the best potential for fulfilling a predetermined set of requirements. The theoretical effort in the area of laser research at the Army Research Laboratory has been directed toward this goal. In this effort, we developed a consistent model of the host and interactions to predict spectra and intensities for all the lanthanides in a given host and predict these quantities for new systems.

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# 1. Introduction

Solid-state laser materials, for the most part, involve a triply ionized lanthanide (rare-earth ion) as a dilute substitutional impurity in a crystalline host material. There are exceptions, such as the lanthanide pentaphosphates ( $\text{LnP}_5\text{O}_{14}$ ) that, rather than being dilute, are effectively 100-percent doped, and the glasses that are not crystalline in the sense of a systematic lattice. However, in the pentaphosphates very little concentration quenching is observed, indicating that each lanthanide ion is electronically isolated, and in the glasses some local ordering exists near the impurity so that, in either case, one may consider the effects in the context of the original assumptions.

The 13 interesting triply ionized lanthanides from  $\text{Ce}^{3+}$  through  $\text{Yb}^{3+}$  have complete electronic inner cores through the  $4d^{10}$  shell and outer shells of  $4f^N 5s^2 5p^6$ , where  $1 \leq N \leq 13$ . The incomplete  $4f$  shell is optically active. It has a multitude of energy levels (representing the many ways  $N$  individual electrons may orient their angular momenta with respect to each other), between which the ion may make transitions and release or absorb radiation. These energy levels are highly degenerate in the free ion, but in the presence of the electrostatic (crystal) field due to the constituent ions of the host material, a splitting occurs that manifests the breakdown of spherical symmetry in crystals. The outer  $5s^2 5p^6$  electrons, as well as the inner core to a lesser extent, serve to shield this crystal field, so that in contrast with the transition-metal ions, the crystal field can be considered quite accurately as a perturbation on the free ion.

The methods of our theoretical study of this problem are as follows:

- (1) To obtain free-ion wavefunction bases for the  $4f^N$  configurations to be used in calculating interactions relevant to the triply ionized lanthanides in a given host material.
- (2) To postulate a phenomenological crystal-field Hamiltonian of the form

$$H_x = \sum_{km} B_{km}^* \sum_i C_{km}(i) \quad (1)$$

having the point-group symmetry at the impurity ion site, to vary the phenomenological  $B_{km}$  in a free-ion basis of states, and to fit theoretical to experimental energy levels.

- (3) To characterize the host material so that a summation may be performed over the constituent ions to determine their cumulative electrostatic field at the impurity (lanthanide) ion site.
- (4) To consider shielding, distortion, dielectric, wavefunction overlap (covalency), and other such effects that may influence the observed spectra.

- (5) To obtain derived  $B_{km}$  from the fundamental properties of the host material (purpose 3) and other impurity-ion/host interactions (purpose 4) and to reconcile them with phenomenological  $B_{km}$  (purpose 2) by refining the characterization of the host and the nature of the interactions.
- (6) To use the resultant consistent model of the host and interactions to predict spectra and intensities for all the lanthanides in a given host, and to predict these quantities for new systems once the crystallographic parameters of a new host material are known.
- (7) To determine which systems have the greatest potential for fulfilling the requirements for a given application.

## 2. Background

The research concerned with identifying the energy levels of rare-earth ions in crystals and understanding the interactions that determine these Stark splittings has proceeded along two general lines. The phenomenological approach has been to diagonalize the crystal-field Hamiltonian given by equation (1) in some basis representing the  $f^N$  configuration of the particular rare earth, and to vary the  $B_{km}$  until a best fit is obtained between theoretical and experimental energy levels. The resultant  $B_{km}$ , referred to as the phenomenological crystal-field parameters, represent the net total interaction between the impurity ion and the host material and reflect the point-group symmetry at the impurity-ion site. Secondly, attempts have been made to derive the  $B_{km}$  by devising models for considering the fundamental interactions between the impurity ion and the host material. The  $B_{km}$  obtained by this method, referred to as derived crystal-field parameters, are ab initio values to be compared with the phenomenological  $B_{km}$  for testing the accuracy of models. Once the models are refined so that derived and phenomenological  $B_{km}$  are approximately equal, then the model can be used to predict the properties of new impurity-ion/host systems.

### 2.1 Phenomenological $B_{km}$

According to the discussion above, the phenomenological  $B_{km}$  that result in a best fit to experimental energy levels will not be unique, but will be functions of the basis chosen for diagonalizing  $H_x$ . Early theories employed Russell-Saunders (JLS) states and operator-equivalent techniques to obtain  $B_{km}$  that fit the experimental data in separate multiplets [1-5]. Once data were accumulated above the ground multiplets that are relatively pure, the more general operator-equivalent technique was used, which assumes (again) pure  $J$  states but with  $L$  and  $S$  mixing dependent on the free-ion Racah parameters,  $E^k$ , and the spin-orbit constant,  $\zeta$ , corresponding to the Coulomb and spin-orbit interactions. In each of these procedures,  $J$  mixing by the crystal field was neglected, owing primarily to the unavailability of adequate computer facilities. Later, the entire  $f^2, f^3, f^{12}$ ,

and  $f^{11}$  configurations, respectively, of  $\text{Pr}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Nd}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Tm}^{3+}$ , and  $\text{Er}^{3+}$  were diagonalized and the  $B_{km}$  varied simultaneously with the free-ion parameters to fit observed spectra in certain host materials [6–11]. This method, while in principle the most elaborate possible, suffers from the incapability of free-ion parameters to fit observed centroids and from its inability to be extended to the other  $f^N$  configurations because of the large number of levels involved.

To circumvent some of these problems, namely tractability, lack of  $J$ -mixing, and ill-fitting of centroids, Karayianis [12] introduced the method of an effective spin-orbit Hamiltonian (ESOH). After exhaustive application [13–21], it became clear that this method too was deficient because it operated in a Russell-Saunders basis that is valid only for certain isolated multiplets.

To improve on this deficiency, Carnall et al [22] diagonalized a seven-parameter free-ion Hamiltonian,  $H_{FI}$ , of the form

$$H_{FI} = \sum_i E^k e_k + \zeta \sum_i l_i \cdot s_i + \alpha L(L+1) + \beta G(G_2) + \gamma G(R_7) , \quad (2)$$

to obtain wavefunctions and reduced matrix elements. In equation (2), the  $E^k$  ( $k = 1, 2$ , and  $3$ ) are the Racah parameters,  $\zeta$  is the spin-orbit constant, and  $G(G_2)$  and  $G(R_7)$  are the Casimir operators for the Lie groups  $G_2$  and  $R_7$ . A subspace was then chosen of several of the low-lying multiplets and their centroids (usually 10 to 12 multiplets) varied independently along with the  $B_{km}$  to fit theoretical to experimental energy levels [23]. From the resultant centroids, one may then determine the “free-ion” parameters that best fit the crystal spectra for the ion/host system in question [24]. This procedure has the advantage of complete diagonalization (provided a sufficient number of multiplets are chosen), so that the neglected multiplets do not appreciably affect the crystal splittings in the energy range of interest, and the resultant centroids do not indicate that “free-ion” parameters differ appreciably from those that initially determined the wavefunctions.

Experimental problems, as well as the theoretical one discussed above, are encountered in the process of determining phenomenological crystal-field parameters. Many spurious lines appear in the spectra, as well as the not-so-spurious ones of vibronic origin, which serve to complicate the identification process. In addition, imperfections in the host crystal as well as magnetic dipole transitions between certain levels serve to destroy the prominent electric dipole selection rules and make identification difficult. In such cases, other data are very useful, such as electron spin-resonance measurements that accurately determine the properties of the ground state [25–35]. These measurements and Zeeman measurements [36] that determine  $g$  factors for the ground and certain excited states quite frequently can be of assistance in identifying levels, as well as placing restrictions on the  $B_{km}$ , when used with the energy-level fitting procedure [37]. The partial  $g$ -sum rule has been developed in this connection to provide experimentalists with a further tool for identifying spectra [38].

## 2.2 Derived $B_{km}$

The approach to deriving crystal-field parameters begins with the ligand field assumption that gives

$$B_{km} = \langle r^k \rangle A_{km} , \quad (3)$$

where  $\langle r^k \rangle$  is the  $k$ th moment of the impurity ion's radial wavefunction and the  $A_{km}$  are components of the spherical tensor decomposition of the crystalline electrostatic field, referred to as crystal-field components. To evaluate the  $A_{km}$ , one begins with a simple point-charge lattice sum [34,39,40]. Other refinements have been included, such as the effects of higher moments of charge distribution of neighboring ions [41,42], overlap with the ligand [43–45], and molecular orbitals involving the rare-earth ion [46]. The most significant modification to equation (3) was a result of considering the shielding effects of the outer  $5s^2 5p^6$  and the inner core electrons that are expressed in the form of shielding factors [47–51],  $\sigma_k$ , which gives

$$B_{km} = \langle r^k \rangle (1 - \sigma_k) A_{km} . \quad (4)$$

Other effects, notably possible local distortion of the crystalline host material, that could revise the form of derived  $B_{km}$  or affect the results in other ways were investigated and discarded [52], with the exception of a modification of  $\langle r^k \rangle_{\text{HF}}$  evaluated with Hartree-Fock (HF) radial wavefunctions [53–56]. Since calculations of Slater integrals using HF wavefunctions give very much larger values than those determined experimentally [57,58], it was concluded that an appropriate modification to the HF values of  $\langle r^k \rangle$  should be

$$\langle r^k \rangle = \tau^{-k} \langle r^k \rangle_{\text{HF}} , \quad (5)$$

where  $\tau < 1$ . The  $\tau$  for each lanthanide are assumed to be approximately host-independent, consistent with previous calculations that show Slater integrals to be only moderately host-dependent [59,60]. Other improvements in the techniques for evaluating  $\langle r^k \rangle$  that have not yet been incorporated in these calculations include electron correlation effects [61] (that correspond to higher order corrections to the many-body problem), relativistic effects [62], and the dielectric effects of the medium [60]. We have obtained values for the  $A_{km}$  for a number of hosts by performing a lattice sum assuming valence charges for the constituent ions of the host lattice [63]. Brewer [64] later incorporated covalency effects, known to be important for tightly bound radicals in the lattice, by assuming an arbitrary charge  $q$  for the covalent anion, consistent with the total charge of the radical, and considering its effective position,  $\eta$ , to be slightly shifted from the nuclear position. The  $A_{km}(q\eta)$  obtained in this manner are functions of the  $q$  and  $\eta$ , which were then varied along with  $\tau$  defined above to fit derived  $B_{km}(\tau; q\eta)$  of the form

$$B_{km}(\tau; q\eta) = \tau^{-k} \langle r^k \rangle_{\text{HF}} (1 - \sigma_k) A_{km}(q\eta) \quad (6)$$

to phenomenological  $B_{km}$  determined by the ESOH method for several lanthanides in  $\text{CaWO}_4$  [65].

Later, improvements on the method for determining the  $A_{km}$  were developed by the self-consistent inclusion of the electrostatic field due to electric dipoles induced in the host lattice [66]. This, in effect, obviates the use of the fictitious  $\eta$  and replaces it with other parameters, the polarizabilities of the host ions. The inclusion of the host's dipoles may result in a more accurate representation of the host, as well as in the parameterization of the electrostatic field in terms of measurable quantities such as the polarizabilities.

### 2.3 Electric and Magnetic Dipole Transition Probabilities and Branching Ratios

The odd- $k$   $A_{km}$ , the  $r^k$  expectation values between the lower  $4f$  and higher  $nd$  and  $ng$  configurations, and  $\Delta_{nl} = E_{nl} - E_{4f}$  energy differences [64,67] are required for calculating electric dipole intensities for the lanthanides [68–70]. Recent methods for obtaining some of the  $\langle nl | r^k | 4f \rangle$  and  $\Delta_{nl}$  have given fairly accurate results for these quantities in the Hartree-Fock approximation, and interpolations have given approximate values for all the lanthanides [71]. Crystal wavefunctions that result from the fitting of energy levels with a phenomenological Hamiltonian are used to obtain level-to-level intensities for various polarizations to be compared with experiment [72]. These calculations provide a crucial test for the adequacy of the models. A fairly complete set of predicted spectra and intensities assuming  $S_4$  or higher point-group symmetry has been reported for all the lanthanides in 10 host materials [73–82]:  $\text{CaWO}_4$ ,  $\text{LiYF}_4$  (yttrium lithium fluoride—YLF),  $\text{YVO}_4$ ,  $\text{YPO}_4$ ,  $\text{YAsO}_4$ ,  $\text{Y}_2\text{SiBe}_2\text{O}_7$ ,  $\text{Y}_3\text{Al}_5\text{O}_{12}$  (yttrium aluminum garnet—YAG),  $\text{Y}_3\text{Ga}_5\text{O}_{12}$  (yttrium gallium garnet—YGG),  $\text{YAlO}_3$  (YALO), and  $\text{LnP}_5\text{O}_{14}$  where  $\text{Ln}$  is one of the lanthanides.

In the intensity calculations for rare-earth ions, as in cases [83] like  $\text{LaF}_3$ , the dipole operator,  $\mathbf{p} = -e\mathbf{r}$ , is replaced by the effective dipole operator of Judd [68] and Ofelt [69] by

$$\mu_\alpha = -\sqrt{\frac{7}{3}} \sum_{k,t} (2t+1) N_k(t) (A^{(k)} U^{(t)})_\alpha^{(1)}, \quad (7)$$

where  $\alpha = 0, \pm 1$ ,  $t = 2, 4$ , and  $6$ , and  $k = 1, 3, 5$ , and  $7$ , with  $(A^{(k)} U^{(t)})_\alpha^{(1)}$  representing a coupling of the irreducible tensors  $A^{(k)}$  and  $U^{(t)}$  by a Clebsch-Gordan coefficient to form a tensor of rank 1 and projection  $\alpha$ . The  $A^{(k)}$  is a tensor whose components are  $A_{km}$ . In equation (7), a factor  $e$ , the electronic charge, has been suppressed so that the units of  $\mu$  are angstroms and those of  $S_{if}$  (to be discussed later) are  $\text{\AA}^2$ . Also,

$$N_k(t) = \sum_l \sqrt{2l+1} W(k133;t l) R_k(t) \langle l(0) 1(0) | 3(0) \rangle \langle 3(0) k(0) | l(0) \rangle, \quad (8)$$

where the sum covers the values  $l = 2$  and  $4$ ,  $W(abcd;ef)$  is a Racah coefficient, and  $\langle a(\alpha) b(\beta) | c(\delta) \rangle$  is a Clebsch-Gordan coefficient [84]. The  $R_k(l)$  of equation (8) are given by

$$R_k(l) = \sum_n \langle 4f | r^k | nl \rangle \langle nl | r | 4f \rangle / \Delta E_{nl} , \quad (9)$$

where  $\langle n'l' | r^k | nl \rangle$  are radial matrix elements of  $r^k$  between states  $nl$  and  $n'l'$  and  $\Delta E_{nl}$  is the difference [85] in energy between the configurations  $4f^{N-1}nl$  or  $3d^9 4f^{N+1}$  and the configuration  $4f^N$ . Values of  $R_k(l)$  for all the triply ionized rare-earth ions are given elsewhere (Leavitt and Morrison [83], table II) along with the detailed description of the derivation of the results. The electric dipole line strengths were computed from

$$S_{fi}^e = \sum_{f,i} |\langle f | r | i \rangle|^2 \quad (10)$$

where the sum on  $f$  and  $i$  on the right side covers the various components of the wave functions of the energy levels of  $f$  and  $i$ .

The magnetic dipole operator used in the computations is

$$\mathbf{M} = \frac{1}{2} \alpha_0 a_0 (\mathbf{L} + g_e \mathbf{S}) , \quad (11)$$

where  $\alpha_0$  is the fine structure constant and  $a_0$  is the Bohr radius. Also, as in the case of the electric dipole operator, the electronic charge is suppressed and  $g_e$  is the free-electron  $g$ -factor. Similar to equation (10), the magnetic dipole line strength is

$$S_{fi}^m = \sum_{f,i} |\langle f | m | i \rangle|^2 . \quad (12)$$

In both the electric and magnetic dipole cases, a multiplet-to-multiplet line strength is defined by

$$S_{JJ'} = \sum_{if} S_{fi} ,$$

where  $i$  refers to the levels in the multiplet  $J$  and  $f$  refers to the levels in  $J'$ . The multiplet-to-multiplet branching ratios for electric or magnetic dipole transitions are given by

$$\beta_{JJ'} = \frac{(E_J - E_{J'})^3 S_{JJ'}}{\sum_{JJ'} (E_J - E_{J'})^3 S_{JJ'}} , \quad (13)$$

with the  $J'$  sum covering all multiplets such that  $E_J > E_{J'}$ , and we have assumed that each multiplet is equally populated. All the above quantities and some combinations were calculated elsewhere [83] as well as  $g$  values, where they exist, for each level. The comparison with experimental results was, in general, very good and gave considerable confidence in the method and encouragement toward future computations.

### 3. Computer Programs

Computer programs were developed at Harry Diamond Laboratories (now part of the Army Research Laboratory) to perform the calculations required in the above work. These programs were then extended so that we can now perform the following calculations for all the lanthanides,  $4f^N$ , and actinides,  $5f^N$ , for  $1 \leq N \leq 13$ :

- (1) Calculate free-ion energies and derivatives with respect to the seven free-ion parameters,  $E^1, E^2, E^3, \zeta, \alpha, \beta$ , and  $\gamma$ .
- (2) Calculate reduced matrix elements of the unit spherical tensors  $U^{(2)}, U^{(4)}$ , and  $U^{(6)}$  among all the free-ion wavefunctions.
- (3) Select reduced matrix elements between free-ion wavefunctions for any preassigned subspace and form crystal subspaces for any point group other than  $C_1$  or  $C_i$ .
- (4) Diagonalize the crystal-field Hamiltonian in the subspace and vary the multiplet centroids and phenomenological crystal-field parameters to obtain a least-squares fit between theoretical and experimental energy levels.
- (5) Use centroids obtained in (4) with derivatives given in (1) to calculate new "free-ion" parameters relevant to the particular host.
- (6) Calculate electric and magnetic dipole transition probabilities between all crystal levels for any point group other than  $C_1$  or  $C_i$ .

For deriving crystal-field parameters, a general lattice sum program has been developed for any site in the 230 space groups that can determine the electrostatic field due to the monopoles of the host ions — represented by  $A_{km}^M$  — and the self-consistent dipole — represented by  $A_{km}^D$ .

Programs have also been written to perform a variety of less complicated calculations, such as determining branching ratios for the fluorescence of a higher multiplet to lower multiplets for any rare earth in any host material. We can then compare these multiplet-to-multiplet transition probabilities with sums over individual level-to-level transition probabilities to establish the effects of multiplet mixing by the crystal field. Also, the Judd-Ofelt parameters,  $\Omega_k$ , are calculated along with the  $g$ -factors where applicable to the particular ion/host combination.

The first application of all the computations mentioned above was to the analysis of a number of rare-earth ions in  $\text{LaF}_3$ . In this host, which is hex-

agonal, the rare-earth ions occupy sites with  $C_2$  symmetry, with the principal  $C_2$  axis perpendicular to the  $c$ -axis of the crystal. This calculation of all quantities was therefore a stringent test of the theory as developed above. In addition, other programs have been written to evaluate the laser properties, such as threshold conditions, slope efficiency, etc, of single and two-species lasers as functions of the transition probabilities calculated as described in (6).

## 4. Analysis of Rare-Earth Spectra

The analysis of the spectra of rare-earth ions [86] in  $\text{LaF}_3$  is presented in some detail since the method used in the analysis is, in general, the same as used presently for those hosts where the rare-earth ion is assumed to occupy a site of low symmetry ( $C_2$ ,  $C_s$ ,  $D_2$ ,  $C_{2h}$ , and a crude approximation to  $C_1$  or  $C_i$ ).

The methods outlined in section 2 were used in the analysis of the experimental data taken on a number of rare-earth ions in the host materials given in that section. That is, values of  $\rho_k = \langle r^k \rangle_{HF} (1 - \sigma_k) / \tau^k$  for each of the rare-earth ions were found, and they are given elsewhere [86]. These  $\rho_k$  were used to determine  $B_{km} = \rho_k A_{km}$ , with the  $A_{km}$  obtained by the monopole terms only and the latest detailed x-ray results for  $\text{LaF}_3$ . The  $B_{km}$  were then used as starting values in each ion with an odd number of electrons for which experimental data existed, and we determined a best fit to the experimental data by varying the  $B_{km}$ . The ions with an odd number of electrons were chosen because in  $C_2$  symmetry there is essentially only one type of Kramer's doublet with the irreducible representation  $\Gamma_{3,4}$  for these ions. We divided the  $B_{km}$  thus determined by  $\rho_k$  to determine a phenomenological set of  $A_{km}$ ; since it is assumed that the  $A_{km}$  are functions of the host only and not ion dependent, we simply averaged the set of  $A_{km}$  to obtain a unique  $A_{km}$  for each allowed value of  $k$  and  $m$ . These  $A_{km}$  were then used again as starting values in the fitting procedure, with possibly some reassignment of levels, and the fitting process repeated until it was determined that nothing more could be gained by continuing the process. The resulting  $A_{km}$  were then used as starting values in the same fitting process of the data on ions with an even number of electrons. Finally, the same procedure was used on all the ions employing all the experimental data.

A similar, but more extensive, analysis was made on rare-earth spectra and intensity measurements of these ions doped in  $\text{Y}_2\text{O}_3$  [85,87-90]. This host material has two types of sites; one site has  $C_2$  symmetry and the other site has  $C_{3i}$  symmetry. The latter site has much weaker absorption, as only magnetic dipole transitions are allowed in  $C_{3i}$  symmetry. The agreement between experiment and theory for the  $C_{3i}$  site was quite poor. The agreement with experiment was better on the  $C_2$  sites, but not as good as was achieved for the calculations on rare-earth ions in  $\text{LaF}_3$ . A similar calculation to the above was done on the spectra of  $\text{Nd}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Er}^{3+}$  in

$\text{Bi}_4\text{Ge}_3\text{O}_{12}$  [91], but most of the calculation was of a predictive nature because of a lack of experimental data on rare-earth ions in this host.

The absorption spectra of a number of rare-earth ions in  $\text{Y}_3\text{Al}_5\text{O}_{12}$  (YAG) [92–96] have been analyzed with phenomenological crystal-field parameters obtained in all cases, but with only limited application of the other aspects of the theory described above. The analysis was limited to comparison with available experimental data.

Similarly, the absorption and emission spectra of a number of rare-earth ions in mixed garnets [97–101] have been analyzed with phenomenological crystal-field parameters obtained and branching ratios calculated in many cases. One result obtained for all the garnets analyzed was that the best fit to the phenomenological  $B_{km}$  was achieved with an oxygen charge,  $q_o = -1.8$ , which is used in the monopole sum given by

$$A_{km} = -e^2 \sum_j \frac{q_j C_{km}(\hat{R}_j)}{R_j^{k+1}}, \quad (14)$$

where  $q_j$  is the charge (in units of electronic charge) on the ion at  $\mathbf{R}_j$ .

A different application of the theory was in the analysis of the spectra of triply ionized erbium in ErAs [102]. The absorption spectra of  $\text{Er}^{3+}$  in a thin film of ErAs, which was grown by molecular beam epitaxy on a substrate of GaAs, were reported [103]. In ErAs the erbium ion site has  $O_h$  symmetry, and only magnetic dipole transitions are allowed. The reported energy levels were analyzed, and the phenomenological crystal-field parameters,  $B_{km}$ , were obtained. These  $B_{km}$  and the matrix elements of the magnetic dipole operator were used in equation (12) to give the calculated absorption spectra as a function of temperature. A Lorentz line shape was assumed with a line width of  $3 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  as reported, and when the results were plotted on a comparable scale, practically a perfect match was achieved for the three temperatures of the reported data. Later the analysis was extended [104] to include a prediction of the absorption spectra of other lanthanides,  $\text{Ln}^{3+}$ , in LnAs.

Recently we have been collaborating with Norman Barnes of NASA Langley Research Center and his co-workers on the analysis of potential 1.5- to 2- $\mu\text{m}$  lasers. For this purpose, we chose the ions  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Tm}^{3+}$  as the lasing ions and calculated the line-to-line temperature-dependent branching ratios for these ions in the site with  $D_2$  symmetry in 10 garnet hosts [105,106]. Of these hosts, we had good experimental data on  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  in YAG [96] and limited experimental data on  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  in  $\text{Y}_3\text{Ga}_5\text{O}_{12}$  (YGG). Using the procedure outlined above, we found that the best fit to the phenomenological  $B_{km}$  using equation (14) was achieved for  $q_o = -1.79$ . However, when we used the predicted  $B_{km}$  for  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  in YGG, the calculated energy levels differed considerably from the experimental values. We then decided to obtain a better set of  $\rho_k$  for  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  by using the concept of rotational invariance [107–109]; that is,

$$\rho_k = S_k(B)/S_k(A) , \quad (15)$$

where

$$S_k(X) = \left[ \sum_{m=-k}^k X_{km}^* X_{km} \right]^{1/2} \quad (16)$$

with  $S_k(B)$  computed with the phenomenological crystal-field parameters for  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  in YAG, and  $S_k(A)$  calculated with  $q_0 = -1.7$  in equation (14). With the  $\rho_k$  thus determined, the  $B_{km}$  were calculated along with the energy levels for  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  in the remaining nine garnets. The odd- $k$   $A_{km}$  were also computed with equation (14) and  $q_0 = -1.7$ . The line-to-line radiative lifetimes were calculated for levels  $i$  in the  $^5I_7$  multiplet to levels  $j$  in the  $^5I_8$  multiplet of  $\text{Ho}^{3+}$  by

$$\frac{1}{\tau_{ij}} = \frac{32\pi^3\alpha_0}{3c^2} \left( X_{ij} S_{ij}^{ed} + X'_{ij} S_{ij}^{md} \right) \nu_{ij}^3 , \quad (17)$$

where

$$X_{ij} = \frac{n_{ij}(n_{ij}^2 + 2)^2}{9} , \quad (18)$$

$$X'_{ij} = n_{ij}^3 , \quad (19)$$

$n_{ij}$  is the index of refraction at the wavelength  $\lambda_{ij}$  ( $\lambda_{ij}(\mu\text{m}) = 10^4/(E_i - E_j)$ ) and  $\alpha_0$  is the fine structure constant ( $1/\alpha_0 = 137.0373$ ).

The branching ratios as a function of temperature are given by

$$\beta_{ij}(T) = \frac{\frac{Z_i}{\tau_{ij}}}{\sum_{ij} \frac{Z_i}{\tau_{ij}}} \quad (20)$$

and

$$Z_i = \frac{e^{-E_i/kT}}{\sum_i e^{-E_i/kT}} . \quad (21)$$

In equations (17) through (21), it is assumed that  $i$  belongs with levels in the  $^5I_7$  multiplet and  $j$  belongs with levels in the  $^5I_8$  multiplet. The temperature-dependent branching ratios were calculated with equation (20). Equations (17) through (21) above were also used in a model of a quasi four-level laser, and it was found that for room temperature, the  $Y_3Ga_5O_{12}$  (YGG) host had the lowest threshold for  $^4I_7 \rightarrow ^4I_8$  laser threshold.

These computations were repeated for  $Tm^{3+}$  in the 10 garnets with the transition from the  $^3F_4$  to the  $^3H_6$  multiplet (the  $^4F_4$  multiplet is frequently labeled the  $^3H_4$  multiplet). In the calculations for both  $Ho^{3+}$  and  $Tm^{3+}$ , the index of refraction in each garnet was represented by a Sellmeier equation with the constants in the equation determined by fitting of the experimental values. In most analyses of data taken on the spectra of the heavy rare-earth ions in the garnet hosts, the transitions are assumed to be electric dipole, and the Judd-Ofelt parameters,  $\Omega_k$ , are used. However, because of the strong crystal fields in the garnets, there is considerable  $J$  mixing in the wavefunctions that is not taken into account by the simple Judd-Ofelt analysis, which assumes electric dipoles only and no  $J$  mixing by the crystal field [110]. Further, we have found that for many of the transitions, the strength of the magnetic dipole given by equation (12) was as large or larger than the electric dipole strength given by equation (10). Consequently, we have included both  $J$  mixing by the crystal field and magnetic dipole transitions in the analysis.

## 5. Conclusion

Most of the discussion given here has been directed toward the derivation of even- $k$   $A_{km}$  such that  $\rho_k A_{km}$  is a best approximation to the phenomenological  $B_{km}$  obtained from the experimental energy levels. Here the  $A_{km}$  are from the point ion model and its extension to include the dipole correction, developed at Harry Diamond Laboratories (now part of the Army Research Laboratory). We then use the theory to derive odd- $k$   $A_{km}$  for the electric dipole transition calculations. The derived  $B_{km}$  are used for the magnetic dipole transitions. In these calculations, the emphasis has been on predicting, rather than explaining, the quantities involved in the crystal-field splittings and the intensity of line-to-line transitions.

The research workers at Laboratoires de Bellevue, France, have extended the contributions to the quadrupole moments of the ions in the solid [111–116] obtaining  $A_{km} = A_{km}^M + A_{km}^D + A_{km}^Q$ . They found that the contribution from the quadrupoles, when handbook values of the dipole polarizability,  $\alpha_1$ , and quadrupole polarizability,  $\alpha_2$ , are included, is  $|A_{km}^Q| < |A_{km}^D| < |A_{km}^M|$ . This may be caused by saturation of both polarizabilities because of the extremely large dipole and quadrupole fields. Of course there is the possibility that the multipolar expansion diverges, but it is more likely that the handbook values of  $\alpha_1$  and  $\alpha_2$  should be considerably reduced for the calculation of  $A_{km}^D$  and  $A_{km}^Q$ . It would then seem reasonable to attempt to fit the phenomenological  $A_{km}$  as was discussed in section

2.2 by varying the point charges along with the polarizabilities. Such a procedure is very long and very tedious, and we have neither the manpower nor the funding to undertake this task.

Thus it seems that the procedure of varying the ligand charges is the method that we shall use for some time. It should not be forgotten that the purpose of varying the charges and other quantities was not just to be able to reproduce the phenomenological crystal-field parameters,  $B_{km}$  (even  $k$ ), but to calculate with a certain degree of confidence the  $A_{km}$  with  $k$  odd and to use these parameters in the calculation of the transition probabilities. The so-called Judd-Ofelt parameters, which are easily calculated given the odd- $k$   $A_{km}$  and which are experimentally determined, differ considerably from measurement to measurement for the same ion in the same host [110]. For the heavier rare-earth ions, ignoring the magnetic dipole contributions puts the experimental results in doubt. Some experimental quantity or quantities are needed to give the quality of the predicted intensity when compared with the measured intensity.

Despite these difficulties, work will continue in predicting temperature-dependent line-to-line branching ratios and in predicting the behavior of more sophisticated laser systems. Of course, these systems will be compared with experiment wherever possible, and improvements in the theory will be instituted to bring the two into closer agreement. Work is in progress towards applying the calculated line-to-line transition probabilities to up-conversion and to energy exchange in such laser systems as Tm, Ho:YAG, and other rare-earth ion/host combinations.

## Acknowledgments

Most of the early computer programming and a considerable amount of the theory presented here were done by our coworker, the late Nick Karayianis. Because of this and because of the use of Nick's extensive notes in the preparation of this report, we would like to dedicate this report to him. For extensive modification of the computer program and additional theory, we owe many thanks to our coworker Rich Leavitt. We wish to thank John Bruno for suggesting numerous improvements and frequently finding flaws in our arguments and giving us sound advice on improvement. We also wish to thank all of the members of the old Harry Diamond Laboratories for their cheerful give and take of information during their research on the optical and electron spin resonance properties of the various host/ion combinations under investigation.

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